

NEW BOOKS.

Dr. Mitchell's Excellent Story.

A compact and strong answer to a question is given at page 298 of Dr. S. W. Mitchell's story of "Constance Treecot" (The Centennial Company). "Do I dare it? You can do nothing," says Col. Dudley to the unhappy Greyhurst at that point. This is a story of Missouri in the days of reconstruction. George Treecot of Massachusetts, who had been a Federal Major in the war, had gone to St. Ann in Missouri, in 1870, as agent for his father-in-law, an eccentric and exasperating person, who owned considerable land there. There were squatters on the land, and part of the land was in dispute. There was a lawsuit, and Greyhurst was the lawyer on the other side. He was a man of violent temper. Treecot won his case. Sharp words had passed between him and Greyhurst during the trial. Treecot, a most kindly and amiable man, was going to Greyhurst with a magnanimous proposition on the smiling lips, at the conclusion of the trial, when Greyhurst levelled a pistol at him and shot him dead.

Is for the reader to determine for himself whether Greyhurst was anything more than a revengeful murderer. He had his excuse, which was possibly plausible. The chief point of the story is that Treecot's wife, a young woman of great beauty, devoted herself in a deliberate manner to a plan of revenge. She was from Massachusetts, and her cold purpose does not seem perfectly realistic and conformable to the restrained and admirable point of view established by Mr. Howells. All the other people in the story thought her peculiar; their opinion should be gratifying to Mr. Howells, but she gave no heed to it. Her one thought was to be revenged upon Greyhurst.

Revenge she was. We have spoken of her deliberations. She went away to Europe and recovered her strength. At the end of a year she returned to St. Ann. Greyhurst was getting on. He had lived down the possibly inadequate odds of teaching to his hand. If he had been a man without sensitiveness he would probably have remained safe after Mrs. Treecot's return. As it was, she had no trouble in making him see ghosts. She followed him about in her weeds with her pale face. She sent him one or two letters of reminder—letters that did not hesitate to employ the word "murderer." He thought to marry a girl in California. Mrs. Treecot wrote a brief chapter of history to the girl, who thereupon threw Greyhurst over. He drank; he could not sleep; his affairs went wrong. At last, a desperate man, he again took up his revolver. He levelled it at Mrs. Treecot. She stood up with a smile and proclaimed herself glad to die. "You fool!" said he, and shot himself dead.

We have remarked at page 239 that Mrs. Treecot's sister and the young minister, whom she married later, talked of the stormy politics of the day, and the last novel of Thackeray, which she had not read. "This sounds like those who keep abreast of current fiction, saying such trenchant and comprehensive things in criticism as, 'Oh, it is very good,' or 'I didn't care much for it.' As this young woman and her minister were talking in 1872, which was nine years after Thackeray's death, as we remember, we must think that comment upon a 'last novel' was less punctual than it is nowadays.

That, however, is a small and unimportant matter. This is the best of Dr. Mitchell's stories that have come to our notice. It is very readable and it has an effective and strong dramatic quality. The account of the trial is admirable. A very good tale.

To Death in His Black Devil Wagon.

The promise of an eventful and vigorous chronicle is given early in Harriet Burdett's story of "The Black Motor Car" (G. W. Dillingham Company). In the course of the first ten pages we learn that Jack Porteous, manager of a South Kensington bank, has stolen \$5,000 of the bank's money and is about to run away to South America with Mrs. de la Mothe, a widow, whose face, though faultless and toiled regular and splendidly null as a general thing, can light up on occasion and beam with a luminous provocation calculated to bewilder the male beholder. Porteous will assume disguise and sail in the next steamer to Buenos Ayres, for which distant seaport Mrs. de la Mothe has already bought him a ticket. He takes from a breast pocket and exhibits to his beautiful companion in wrong a packet containing fifty £100 notes, newly abstracted from the bank. He gives her five of the notes with which "to settle up a few things in England" before she follows him in the steamer sailing a fortnight later.

It is not a matter for wonder that at this momentous interview he should have accepted the lady's thoughtful offer of whiskey and soda water instead of tea. It did not surprise us to read that he had drunk a little. Jack Porteous did not sail away to Buenos Ayres with the bank's stolen money. He and the beautiful Mrs. de la Mothe did not live deliciously in Argentina on the proceeds of a theft. When he left Mrs. de la Mothe that afternoon he went to his club and made himself comfortable. He had a hot bath and dressed for the evening. He had sherry and bitters before dinner. The dinner was flawless. He drank after dinner. He returned late in a great fog. He found his wife sitting at the library table. Her head was bowed in her hands. She had no word for him—matter to be noted, for she usually had many. The poor lady was to speak to him on earth no more; she had passed away with a heart ailment. He was so much impressed and disturbed that he broke off with Mrs. de la Mothe. That enchantress, when she learned of his weakness, said: "Go, you cur!" She sent word to the bank, and he was arrested next day. He was sentenced for fourteen years.

Following upon this we have a bewildering succession of stray events. The illustrations indicate a good deal. We see the Earl of Heathstone surprising his daughter Agnes and Mr. Arthur Holmes in the attitude of lovers. "They sprang apart and, turning round, confronted the Earl of Heathstone. His heavy, handsome face was flushed with anger, but he controlled himself with the skill of the trained diplomat. Lady Agnes hid her crimson face in her hands. Arthur Holmes clinched his right fist."

If he had clinched both fists it would not have astonished us. But who the dickens was Lord Heathstone? Why is it recorded that "Jerry drove his fists into Lipp's face with such force that half of the latter's front teeth went down his throat, and the next second he had bitten a piece out of Lord Heathstone's ear?" There is a picture show-

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heroine is hooked into a flowered brocade by a very much overworked tire woman is too great a test of patience. The hero risks his life recklessly on all occasions, either for the sake of his lady or for the convenience of the author, who is so barren of devices that she employs the old expedient of the duel twice over and resorts to the broken sword at last to bring about the denouement. The book is published by Little, Brown & Co.

A horse of quite another color is the vigorous and virile narrative of "The Red Cravat," which Alfred Treadwell Shepard has written of the days when Frederick William ruled in Prussia. Here are picturesque and old time flavor, color and action and originality. The construction of the story is solid and substantial. The character drawing is convincing and clever, sketched in with firm lines and a sure touch. The denouement is one of the most skillfully managed surprises of recent fiction. If at times the plot seems cumbersome and the game moves slowly, it must be remembered that Frederick William of Prussia and his giant grenadiers were heavy and cumbersome pieces to play. If the book is longer than it need to be, it is always diverting. The king's clumsy jester introduces a great deal of unnecessary Latin with his remarks, but it has nothing to do with the story, and the reader can leave it out, as the writer should have done.

The "Red Cravat" is the badge of the king's grenadier guard, and the story centres upon a young Englishman of goodly height, who was impressed into the wearing of it and of his rescue by the quick wit and daring of the English girl he loved. For the rest the book is an expression of period not yet hackneyed by the fiction writer, thoroughly tonic in spirit and adequate in interpretation. The book is published by Macmillan & Co.

Alessandro Scarlatti.

What there is about music and art that makes people who write about them in capable of sticking to plain facts, experts may tell. Here we have the exception that proves the rule in an admirable monograph written only for musicians, in which facts are dealt with as sternly as the most

right historian might demand. Mr. Edward J. Dent's "Alessandro Scarlatti" (Edward Arnold; Longmans, Green & Co.). Mr. Dent's attitude is admirable. Filled with the modern ideas about music, he has to deal with a man who, though he marks a turning point in the history of the art, was an Italian. He manages to be impartial and admiring, though a little too apologetic for his services as head of the Naples school, and as the man who gave definite shape to the opera, but calls him "the father of classical music."

He has made what he could of the few facts known about Scarlatti's life, but his researches are mainly into Scarlatti's music and his arguments are backed up by frequent examples from his scores. Of these the lay reader can hardly judge, but the material for a judgment is put at the disposal of all musicians.

At the end is a long list of Scarlatti's compositions. The book is a model of what a musical monograph should be, and for that reason, apart from its intrinsic merits we hope it may be widely known.

Two Good Musical Books.

Continued on Eighth Page.

PUBLICATIONS.

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Harper's Book News.

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